

"IDEA" earns employee \$5,400 award

by Francis L. Crumb, Information directorate

ROME, N.Y. - It seemed like a good IDEA. It earned Helen Rico, a computer scientist in the Air Force Research laboratory Information directorate's Standard Based Architecture Office, a \$5,400 award. She received the award in April through the Air Force Innovative Development through Employee Awareness, or IDEA, program.

Rico questioned why licenses for Microsoft Office software installed in each of the hundreds of personal computers purchased each year at the Rome Research Site came with boxes of downloading material and user's manuals. Directorate support personnel install the software and provide training for the site's 1,200 federal employees and contractor personnel.

"Each machine we purchase must have a valid license for the Microsoft Operating System, as well as the application software, but it is not necessary to actually pay for all the media and supporting material every time," Rico said. All the extra media and supporting documentation usually ends up gathering dust on an employee's bookcase or in a file cabinet.

By adopting Rico's suggestion to purchase the software license only from the lowest cost supplier, the Air Force expects to save \$180,000 annually at the Rome Research Site alone.

"It boils down to buying Microsoft Office licenses from the lowest possible costing source," Rico said. "When you start purchasing large quantities of PCs, the savings are significant."

Rico's "IDEA" has been forwarded to higher headquarters for review of possible implementation at other locations.

"I would estimate, conservatively, that the Air Force could save \$36 million annually if this method of software purchase is adopted throughout the service," Rico said.

There is no estimate for the number of trees to be saved by eliminating hundreds of thousands of unopened user manuals. @